

100 Essay Quotes for UPSC Mains

1. Democracy, Governance & Constitution (1 to 12)

1. "Democracy is not merely a form of government. It is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience." ~ Dr. B.R. Ambedkar
2. "However good a Constitution may be, if those who are implementing it are not good, it will prove to be bad." ~ Dr. B.R. Ambedkar
3. "Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy." ~ Dr. B.R. Ambedkar
4. "The government of the people, by the people, for the people." ~ Abraham Lincoln
5. "The price of freedom is eternal vigilance." ~ popularly linked to Thomas Jefferson
6. "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." ~ Lord Acton
7. "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." ~ Martin Luther King Jr.
8. "The best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter." ~ Winston Churchill
9. "Freedom is not worth having if it does not include the freedom to make mistakes." ~ Mahatma Gandhi
10. "Bad officials are elected by good citizens who do not vote." ~ George Jean Nathan
11. "A nation's culture resides in the hearts and in the soul of its people." ~ Mahatma Gandhi
12. "Swaraj is my birthright, and I shall have it." ~ Bal Gangadhar Tilak

2. Education & Knowledge (13 to 24)

13. "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." ~ Nelson Mandela
14. "The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence." ~ Rabindranath Tagore
15. "Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man." ~ Swami Vivekananda
16. "Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever." ~ Mahatma Gandhi
17. "An investment in knowledge pays the best interest." ~ Benjamin Franklin
18. "The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically." ~ Martin Luther King Jr.
19. "Real education has to draw out the best from the boys and girls to be educated." ~ Mahatma Gandhi
20. "It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it." ~ popularly linked to Aristotle
21. "The mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be kindled." ~ Plutarch

- 22. "Cultivation of mind should be the ultimate aim of human existence." ~ Dr. B.R. Ambedkar
- 23. "Learning gives creativity, creativity leads to thinking, thinking provides knowledge, knowledge makes you great." ~ Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam
- 24. "Knowledge is power. Information is liberating." ~ Kofi Annan

3. Women & Gender Equality (25 to 34)

- 25. "I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved." ~ Dr. B.R. Ambedkar
- 26. "To awaken the people, it is the women who must be awakened. Once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves, the nation moves." ~ Jawaharlal Nehru
- 27. "There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing." ~ Swami Vivekananda
- 28. "Woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacities." ~ Mahatma Gandhi
- 29. "Human rights are women's rights, and women's rights are human rights." ~ Hillary Clinton
- 30. "We cannot all succeed when half of us are held back." ~ Malala Yousafzai
- 31. "A woman is the full circle. Within her is the power to create, nurture and transform." ~ Diane Mariechild
- 32. "Feminism is the radical notion that women are human beings." ~ Cheris Kramarae
- 33. "Empowering women is key to building the future we want." ~ theme from Amartya Sen's development writings
- 34. "When women thrive, all of society benefits." ~ Kofi Annan

4. Environment & Sustainable Development (35 to 44)

- 35. "The Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed." ~ Mahatma Gandhi
- 36. "We do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children." ~ Native American proverb
- 37. "What we are doing to the forests of the world is but a mirror reflection of what we are doing to ourselves." ~ Mahatma Gandhi
- 38. "The environment and the economy are really both two sides of the same coin. If we cannot sustain the environment, we cannot sustain ourselves." ~ Wangari Maathai
- 39. "Climate change is the defining issue of our time, and we are at a defining moment." ~ Antonio Guterres
- 40. "Nature is not a place to visit. It is home." ~ Gary Snyder
- 41. "There are no passengers on Spaceship Earth. We are all crew." ~ Marshall McLuhan
- 42. "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." ~ Brundtland Commission, 1987

- 43. "When the last tree is cut and the last river poisoned, we will realize that we cannot eat money." ~ Cree proverb
- 44. "The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it." ~ Robert Swan

5. Science, Technology & Innovation (45 to 52)

- 45. "Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind." ~ Albert Einstein
- 46. "Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited; imagination encircles the world." ~ Albert Einstein
- 47. "Technology is a useful servant but a dangerous master." ~ Christian Lous Lange
- 48. "It has become appallingly obvious that our technology has exceeded our humanity." ~ popularly linked to Einstein
- 49. "Dream, dream, dream. Dreams transform into thoughts and thoughts result in action." ~ Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam
- 50. "Science is a beautiful gift to humanity; we should not distort it." ~ Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam
- 51. "The science of today is the technology of tomorrow." ~ Edward Teller
- 52. "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic." ~ Arthur C. Clarke

6. Ethics, Character & Integrity (53 to 64)

- 53. "Be the change that you wish to see in the world." ~ popularly linked to Mahatma Gandhi
- 54. "The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong." ~ Mahatma Gandhi
- 55. "Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony." ~ Mahatma Gandhi
- 56. "In a gentle way, you can shake the world." ~ Mahatma Gandhi
- 57. "Waste no more time arguing about what a good man should be. Be one." ~ Marcus Aurelius
- 58. "It is not what we do, but also what we do not do, for which we are accountable." ~ Moliere
- 59. "The time is always right to do what is right." ~ Martin Luther King Jr.
- 60. "Real integrity is doing the right thing, knowing that nobody's going to know whether you did it or not." ~ Oprah Winfrey
- 61. "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." ~ Martin Luther King Jr.
- 62. "He who has a why to live can bear almost any how." ~ Friedrich Nietzsche
- 63. "Non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind." ~ Mahatma Gandhi
- 64. "Morality is the basis of things and truth is the substance of all morality." ~ Mahatma Gandhi

7. Poverty, Inequality & Social Justice (65 to 72)

- 65. "Poverty is the worst form of violence." ~ popularly linked to Mahatma Gandhi
- 66. "Poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings." ~ Nelson Mandela
- 67. "Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice." ~ Nelson Mandela
- 68. "So long as you do not achieve social liberty, whatever freedom is provided by the law is of no avail to you." ~ Dr. B.R. Ambedkar
- 69. "Development can be seen as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy." ~ Amartya Sen
- 70. "Hunger is not a problem of production alone; it is a problem of entitlement." ~ core idea from Amartya Sen's Poverty and Famines
- 71. "The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members." ~ popularly linked to Gandhi
- 72. "Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man you have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him." ~ Mahatma Gandhi (his famous Talisman)

8. Nation, Unity & India (73 to 82)

- 73. "India is not a nation, nor a country. It is a subcontinent of nationalities." ~ Muhammad Ali Jinnah (use carefully, always with a counter-argument)
- 74. "Unity in diversity is India's strength." ~ echoed by many Indian leaders
- 75. "At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom." ~ Jawaharlal Nehru, Tryst with Destiny
- 76. "India of my dreams is an India in which the poorest shall feel that it is their country, in whose making they have an effective voice." ~ Mahatma Gandhi
- 77. "You must be the change agent of a developed India." ~ theme from Dr. Kalam's Ignited Minds
- 78. "Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high... into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake." ~ Rabindranath Tagore
- 79. "Freedom is not given, it is taken." ~ Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose
- 80. "Give me blood, and I shall give you freedom!" ~ Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose
- 81. "Patriotism is religion and religion is love for India." ~ Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay
- 82. "We are Indians, firstly and lastly." ~ Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

9. Peace, War & International Relations (83 to 89)

- 83. "An eye for an eye will only make the whole world blind." ~ popularly linked to Mahatma Gandhi
- 84. "Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved by understanding." ~ Albert Einstein
- 85. "There never was a good war or a bad peace." ~ Benjamin Franklin

- 86. "If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner." ~ Nelson Mandela
- 87. "Wars begin in the minds of men, and it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed." ~ UNESCO Constitution, Preamble
- 88. "You may not be interested in war, but war is interested in you." ~ popularly linked to Leon Trotsky
- 89. "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. The world is one family." ~ Maha Upanishad

10. Perseverance, Success & Self-Belief (90 to 100)

- 90. "Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached." ~ Swami Vivekananda
- 91. "All power is within you; you can do anything and everything." ~ Swami Vivekananda
- 92. "Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life. Think of it, dream of it, live on that idea." ~ Swami Vivekananda
- 93. "You have the right to work, but never to the fruit of work." ~ Bhagavad Gita, 2.47
- 94. "Strength is life, weakness is death." ~ Swami Vivekananda
- 95. "It always seems impossible until it's done." ~ popularly linked to Nelson Mandela
- 96. "Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts." ~ popularly linked to Winston Churchill
- 97. "Man needs difficulties in life because they are necessary to enjoy success." ~ Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam
- 98. "If you fail, never give up, because FAIL means First Attempt In Learning." ~ Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam
- 99. "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." ~ Eleanor Roosevelt
- 100. "Do not wait for leaders; do it alone, person to person." ~ Mother Teresa

How to actually use these (read this part, seriously)

Most aspirants collect 500 quotes and use them badly. Here is what actually works:

- 1. One quote in the intro, maybe 2 or 3 in the body, one in the conclusion. That's it. Quote-dumping annoys examiners and it shows.
- 2. Indian thinkers score better. Ambedkar, Gandhi, Vivekananda, Tagore, Kalam, Amartya Sen. An Einstein quote is fine once, but your essay should sound rooted in Indian thought.
- 3. If you are not 100% sure who said it, do NOT guess a name in the exam hall. Just write "as it is often said" and move on. Wrong attribution is worse than no attribution. The ones I've marked "popularly linked to" are exactly these cases, famous lines with no

verified original source.

4. Section A (philosophical essays) rewards Gita, Upanishad and Tagore lines. Section B (issue-based essays) rewards Sen, Brundtland, and constitutional voices.
5. Don't memorize all 100. Pick 15 versatile ones and know them cold.